

*Government Orders*

rest of the nation? Suddenly after all these years the time has come to examine the mandate of forestry Canada and to determine whether it is still adequate in a changing world as we approach the 21st century.

Moving on to mining, we can also ask ourselves whether our mining practices are sustainable. Obviously this matter needs to be given some close attention. It seems to me that instead of having policies that encourage our production and consumption, our policies should be focused on resource reduction, the development of new materials and greater momentum to recycling so that the results will be in decreased mining activities, mining wastes, water consumption, pollution, deforestation and erosion.

In this respect, in recent years the car industry in particular has made enormous progress with new materials and in general Canadian industry has made considerable progress, although not as good as other nations, in achieving energy efficiency in the consumption of energy per unit of production. We have come a considerable distance but we still have a long way to go if we want to emulate and do as well as Japan and other OECD countries. Compared with those countries we are not doing as well.

Having attempted to set out some principles that could guide us in the management of our natural resources and in the implementation of this bill once it is proclaimed, the Department of Natural Resources has a very important role to play. It would be desirable if it were to apply principles and practices that are sustainable and that apply the concept of sustainability for the long term.

We are, after the Rio conference of 1992, coming around the corner in an effort to ensuring that we have a sustainable development that takes into account the economy and the environment. We must make sure that this agreement by the global community which took place in Rio de Janeiro two years ago is implemented and brought into the legislatures of this country.

I will conclude by again congratulating the minister for having introduced this bill. It is of paramount importance. It is good to see that the concept of sustainable development has somehow found its way into it but it must be given greater prominence; actually, it should be given primacy. Once that is done important principles of the application of that concept will need to be fleshed out so as to give direction to the department in the decades ahead.

• (1720)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** Before proceeding to questions and comments I would like to remind all hon. members that as mentioned this morning Private Members' Business

will be delayed by 20 minutes due to minister's statements. Proceedings on Private Members' Business will therefore commence at 5.50 p.m. this evening.

**Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize the hon. member opposite, the member for Davenport. I recognize his very longstanding, very real commitment to the environment and to sustainable development. This is not a recent conversion. This is as we know a very real, longstanding and very genuine commitment to conservation.

Given the position of stature of the member opposite within his own caucus and given the gravity of the consideration of fossil fuels to that part of the country that I represent, I would like to ask the member to respond to this question specifically.

Would the member recommend an immediate tax on fossil fuels to ensure conservation and to induce consumers to shift away from fossil fuels? Because of his influence within his own caucus, if the hon. member for Davenport had his way today would we have a tax on fossil fuel to conserve energy and to induce people to switch to other fuels tomorrow?

**Mr. Caccia:** Mr. Speaker, if the member for Davenport were on an ego trip he would certainly want to tackle this question fully and give a very comprehensive answer.

We do already have taxes on fossil fuels. Every time we buy gasoline at the pump we pay some hefty provincial and federal taxes; those taxes already exist.

If the thrust of the question of the hon. member is whether I would recommend policies related to the introduction of a carbon tax then we are talking of something completely different. A tax on gasoline or on coal or on gas as I said exists already and it varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. An additional tax would not be a carbon tax. It would be a fake carbon tax. It would be more of the same. It would be nothing new.

A carbon tax is a massive change from the present system of taxation that we have on income and labour and investment and flow of capital to a system of taxation that would be taxing consumption and mainly anything that relates to consumption of fossil fuels.

It is an enormous political somersault, if I may use that term. It would be a big step for which we are not ready and so since we are all more or less realists, and in my caucus I do not have the reputation of being a great realist but I still have my feet on the ground, to recommend a carbon tax would be asking for something for which we are not equipped politically or otherwise.

Sooner or later we will have to cross that bridge if the trend identified by scientists continues. These are not Marxist or left-wing scientists, these are meteorologists at the United Kingdom University of East Anglia, for instance, who have recently produced a map indicating that over the last 30 years